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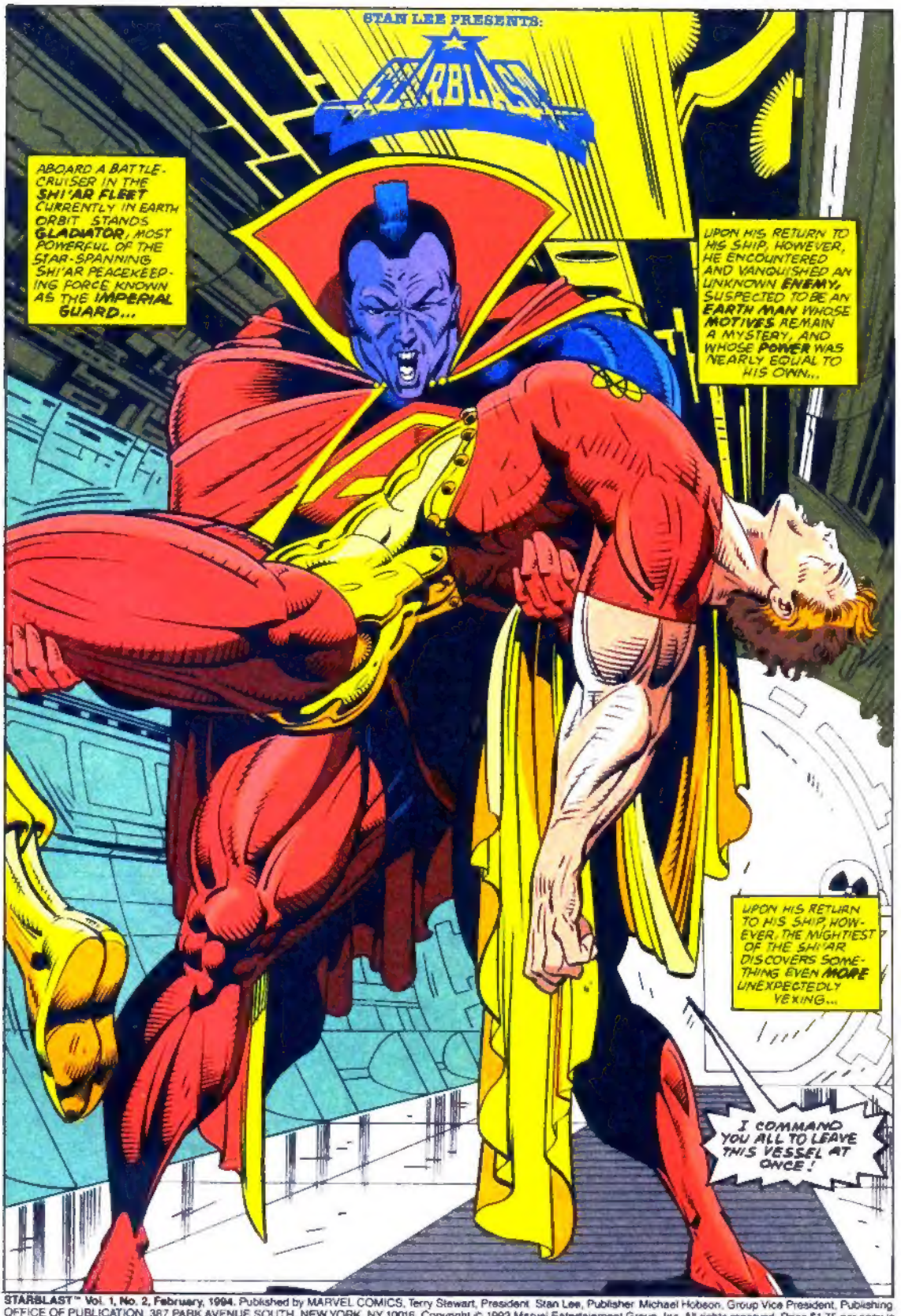
STARBLAST
CATASTROPHE IN THE COSMOS! A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN QUASAR AND GLADIATOR TO PREVENT A GALACTIC DISASTER!
DIRECT EDITION
ALEXANDER



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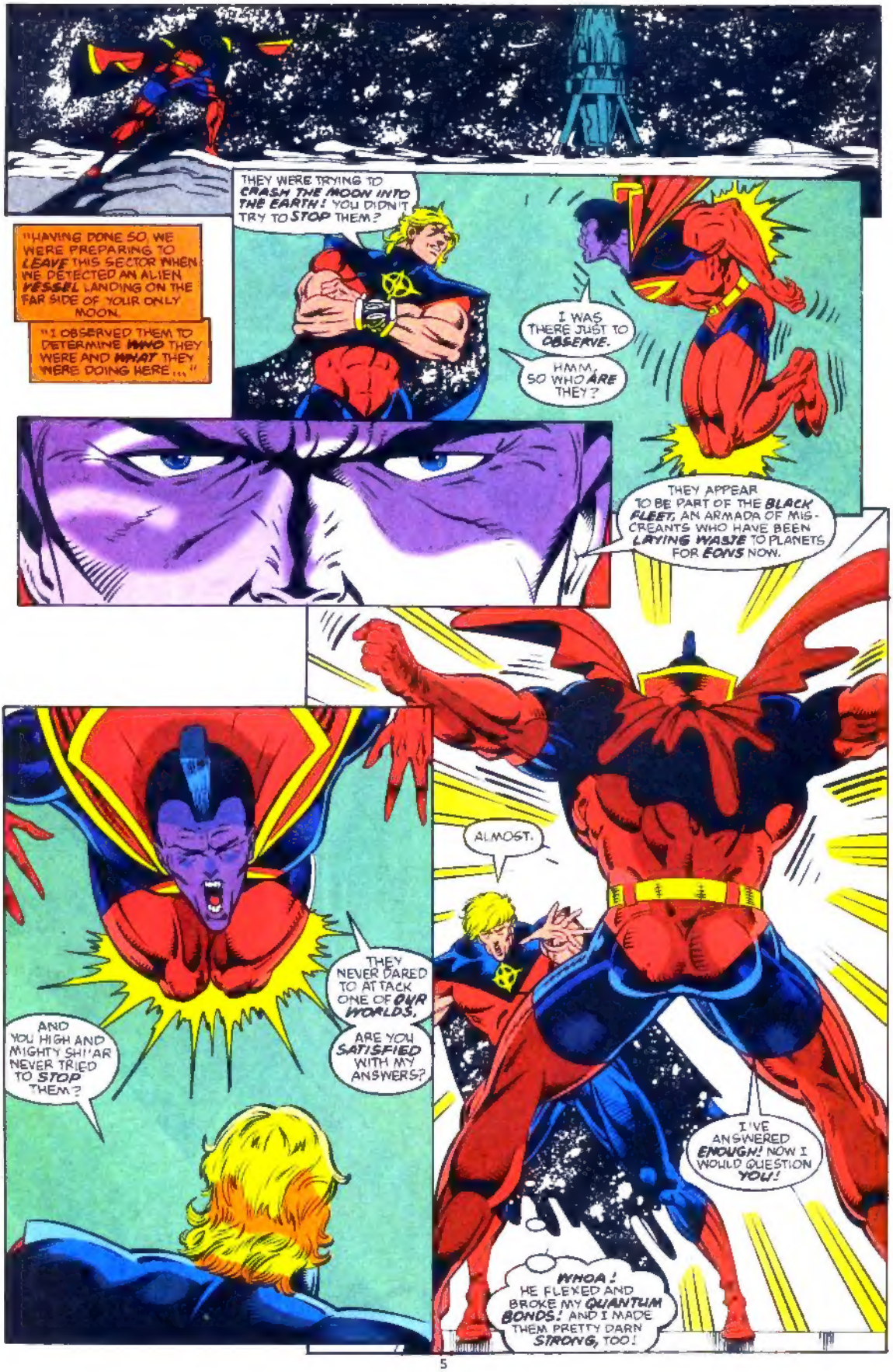
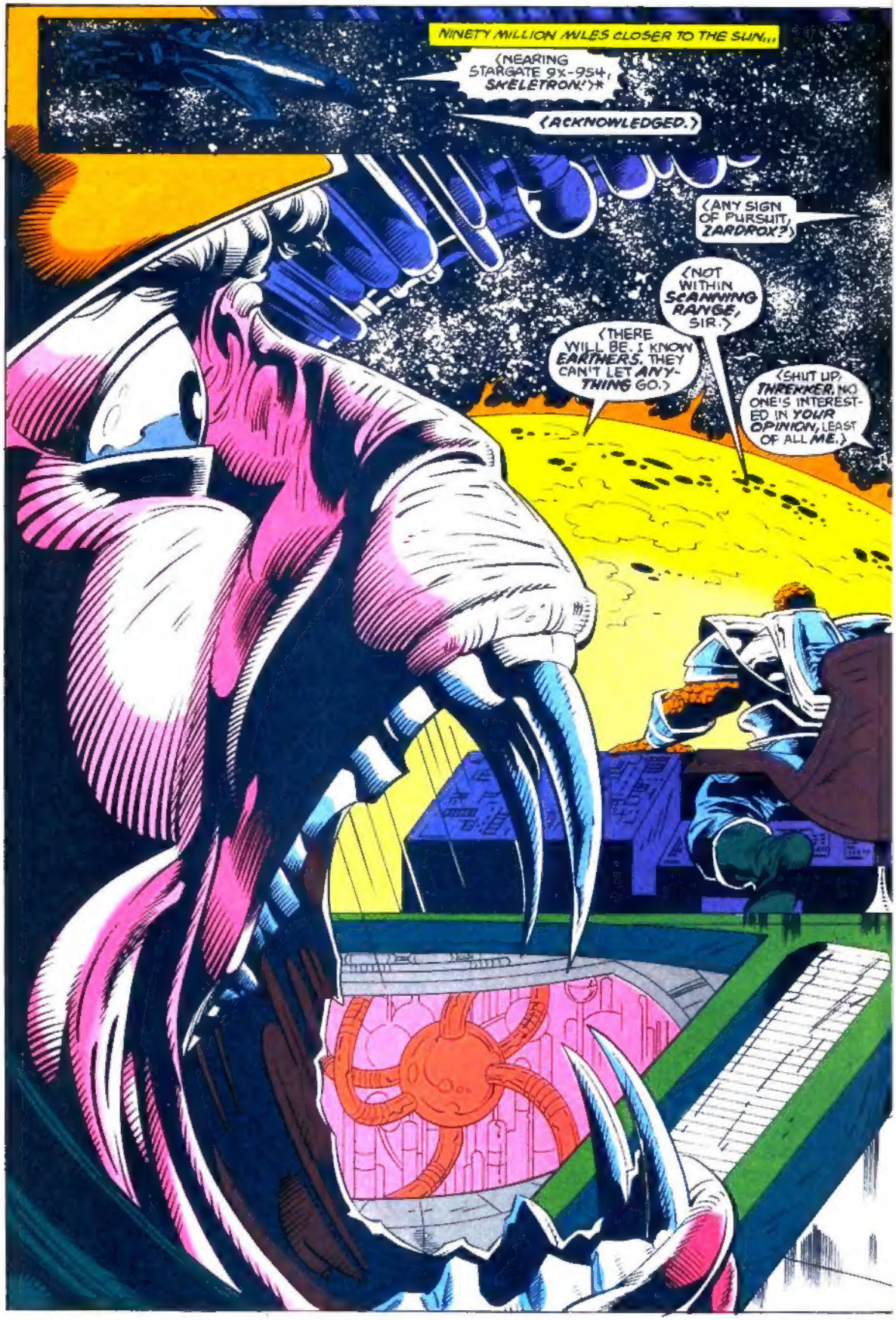
CROSSING GUARD
PERUN
CAPTAIN MARVEL
IKARIS
QUASAR

PERHAPS YOU DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ME FOR THE FIRST TIME, GLADIATOR. WE'VE COMMANDEERED THIS SHIP IN THE NAME OF EARTH!
NOW SET HYPERION DOWN IN FRONT OF YOU... GENTLY!
GOT TO ACT MATTER OF FACT ABOUT ALL THIS. NO TELLING WHAT A FELLOW AS STRONG AS GLADIATOR CAN DO, BUT WITH HIS SHIPMATES ALL BOUND IN QUANTUM-JUICE, MAYBE HE'LL BE COOL...
MARK GRUENWALD-WRITER
HERB TRIMPE-PENCILER
RALPH CABRERA-INKER
MICHAEL WIGGINS-LETTERER
PAUL BECTON-COLORIST
MIKE ROCKWITZ-EDITOR
RALPH MACCHIO-GROUP EDITOR
TOM DEFALCO-EDITOR IN CHIEF
LOCKJAW
VANGUARD
BLACK BOLT
BINARY
DARKSTAR
BINARY! DARKSTAR! YOU LOCATE THE SHIP WE'RE TRAILING?
MAYBE. THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING GOING ON BY THE STARGATE NEAR THE SUN.

I HAVE DONE AS YOU SAY.
A GOLDEN PLATFORM APPEARS BENEATH HIM. QUASAR'S DOING--?
WHAT--?
JUST A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE, DON'T HAVE A COW.
IF YOU'VE HARMED A SINGLE MEMBER OF THIS CREW, YOU WILL LIVE TO REGRET IT!
I DIDN'T HARM ANYBODY! BUT IF MY FRIEND HYPERION HAS SUSTAINED PERMANENT INJURY, YOU'RE GOING TO BE SORRY!
NOW EXPLAIN WHAT YOU SHI'AR ARE DOING IN MY SOLAR SYSTEM?
WE WERE DISPATCHED BY EMPRESS LILANDRA TO THIS SECTOR...
...TO ENGAGE THE HUMAN YOU KNOW AS NOVA IN A TRIAL BY COMBAT TO DETERMINE HIS WORTHINESS FOR THE NEWLY-FORMED XANDARIAN NOVA CORPS!*
* YOU KNEW THIS IF YOU READ NOVA #2. --MIM


"HAVING DONE SO, WE WERE PREPARING TO LEAVE THIS SECTOR WHEN WE DETECTED AN ALIEN VESSEL LANDING ON THE FAR SIDE OF YOUR ONLY MOON.
"I OBSERVED THEM TO DETERMINE WHO THEY WERE AND WHAT THEY WERE DOING HERE..."
THEY WERE TRYING TO CRASH THE MOON INTO THE EARTH! YOU DIDN'T TRY TO STOP THEM?
I WAS THERE JUST TO OBSERVE.
HMM. SO WHO ARE THEY?
THEY APPEAR TO BE PART OF THE BLACK FLEET, AN ARMADA OF MISCREANTS WHO HAVE BEEN LAYING WASTE TO PLANETS FOR EONS NOW.
ALMOST.
THEY NEVER DARED TO ATTACK ONE OF OUR WORLDS.
ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH MY ANSWERS?
AND YOU HIGH AND MIGHTY SH'IAR NEVER TRIED TO STOP THEM?
I'VE ANSWERED ENOUGH! NOW I WOULD QUESTION YOU!
WHOA! HE FLEXED AND BROKE MY QUANTUM BONDS! AND I MADE THEM PRETTY DARN STRONG, TOO!


NINETY MILLION MILES CLOSER TO THE SUN...
(NEARING STARGATE 9X-954, SKELETRON!)*
(ACKNOWLEDGED.)
(ANY SIGN OF PURSUIT, ZARDROX?)
(NOT WITHIN SCANNING RANGE, SIR.)
(THERE WILL BE. I KNOW EARTHERS. THEY CAN'T LET ANYTHING GO.)
(SHUT UP, THREKKER. NO ONE'S INTERESTED IN YOUR OPINION, LEAST OF ALL ME.)

(CODABAC, RELIEVE THREKKER ON SCANNER SURVEILLANCE.)
(ALL RIGHT.)
(FABRIKANT, DO YOU READ ME? BE PREPARED TO LAUNCH THE WARP-MINE AT MY MARK.)
(ACKNOWLEDGED.)
*TRANSLATED FROM AN ALIEN LANGUAGE. --IS THIS MIKE ON?

THE SHI'AR SHIP...
LAUNCH!
NICE TRICK, SNAPPING MY QUANTUM BONDS LIKE THAT. NEXT TIME I KNOW TO USE MAXIMUM STRENGTH.
NOW EXPLAIN TO ME WHO THESE BEINGS ARE YOU SEEK.
WE DON'T KNOW. ALL I KNOW IS THEY'RE ALIENS, THEY KIDNAPED MY GIRLFRIEND AND A WATCHER, AND THEY'RE HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION.
YOUR STARSHIP HERE MAY BE QUITE USEFUL IN OUR PURSUIT OF THEM.
RELEASE MY CREWMEN AND WE MAY BE ABLE TO COME TO TERMS.

NO DEAL.
WHY NOT, QUASAR?
YOU SAW WHAT THIS GUY DID TO HYPERION. I'M NOT WILLING TO TRUST HIM.
EXCUSE ME, EVERYBODY. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. PROCEED WITH THE PLAN.
WHOOOOSH
HE'S TELEPORTING -- WITH GLADIATOR!
BINARY, HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT THE NAVIGATIONAL INSTRUMENTS?
YES, CAPTAIN... SHI'AR SHIPS HAVEN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH SINCE THE LAST TIME I FLEW ONE.
GOOD. QUASAR SEEMED TO THINK THIS SHIP COULD MAKE BETTER SPEED THAN HE COULD WHILE CARTING THE LOT OF US. HEAD FOR THE STARGATE.
QUASAR CAN CATCH UP WHEN HE'S FINISHED WITH GLADIATOR.

BUT THEN.
WHAT IS THIS LIGHT?
MORE TELEPORTATION - AND IF IT'S QUASAR I DON'T THINK HE'S ALONE!
(THE HYPERSPATIAL DISTRESS SIGNAL WAS TRUE--
(-- THIS VESSEL HAS BEEN BOARDED BY ALIENS!)
(ALIENS FROM EARTH, BY THEIR LOOK!)
(STARBOLT, DO YOU REMEMBER ANY EARTH LANGUAGE?)
(A LITTLE, NIGHTSIDE!)
WE ARE THE IMPERIAL GUARD. YOU ARE EARTH PERSONS. WHAT ARE YOU DOING ABOARD AN IMPERIAL VESSEL? WHERE IS GLADIATOR?
THERE ARE ALMOST AS MANY OF THEM AS THERE ARE OF US. THIS COULD GET UGLY.
WE'VE COMMANDEERED THIS SHIP IN PURSUIT OF A POWER THAT MAY PUT THE ENTIRE COSMOS IN JEOPARDY!

YOU RISK AN INTERPLANETARY INCIDENT. ACCORDING TO SHI'AR MILITARY CODE, ANY PARTY WHO BOARDS AN IMPERIAL STARSHIP AND HARMS OR THREATENS TO HARM AN IMPERIAL OFFICER, SOLDIER, OR CITIZEN--
--SHALL BE CONSIDERED AN ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE!
IF YOU WISH TO CALL PERUN, LORD OF STORMS, ENEMY, MAN OF FIRE, THAT IS FINE BY ME!
(VOYAGER! I SENSE GLADIATOR HAS BEEN SHUNTED INTO QUANTUM SPACE! I CAN TRACK HIM!)
(TO MY SIDE, MOONDANCER-- I'LL OPEN THE WAY!)
... THE MUTE INHUMAN BLACK BOLT SOUNDLESSLY COMMUNICATES WITH HIS CANINE COMPANION LOCKJAW--
AND EVEN AS THE TWO SHI'AR DISAPPEAR IN A WRINKLE IN SPACE...

--AND THEY VANISH IN KIND...!
SURRENDER THE SHIP TO US AT ONCE, AND WE WILL ASK THE MAJESTRIX TO SHOW YOU MERCY!
REFUSE AND BE PROSECUTED TO THE FULL EXTENT OF IMPERIAL LAW.
WE ARE EARTH'S MIGHTIEST! WE DON'T FEAR THE LIKES OF YOU.
YOU ARE BINARY, OF THE STARJAMMERS! WHY ARE YOU WITH THESE EARTH PERSONS INSTEAD OF MAJESTRIX'S FRIENDS?
DO NOT CONTINUE TO TOUCH SHIP CONTROLS--!
UNHAND ME, STARBOLT, OR SO HELP ME!

THE QUANTUM ZONE
HOPED TO DITCH HIM HERE, BUT--!
DO YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU ONCE STRANDED MY TEAMMATE, NEUTRON, THROUGH YOUR TELEPORTATION TRICKS?* YOU WILL NOT DO SO WITH ME!
* BACK IN QUASAR #38. --Rock-a-bye
STOP THIS. RETURN US TO THE SHIP--
AHGK! I CAN FEEL THAT THROUGH MY AURA! HE MEANS IT!
ONLY HOPE IS TO KEEP JUMPING IN AND OUT OF THE ZONE. TRY TO DISLODGE HIS GRIP!
--OR I WILL CRUSH YOUR ARM!
BUT THEN.
(GOOD TRACKING, MYLA! WE'VE FOUND THEM!)
CEASE YOUR FUTILE FLIGHT, QUASAR!
OH, SWELL.

I'M OUTNUMBERED; GLADYS GOT A GRIP ON ME THAT WON'T QUIT--
--AND VOYAGER CAN FOLLOW ME WHEREVER I JUMP! I THINK I'M IN DEEP DOO!
HOWEVER,
HEY-HEY! THE CAVALRY'S ARRIVED.
MAYBE BLACK BOLT AND LOCKJAW CAN HANDLE VOYAGER AND MOONDANCER--
--BUT I'M STILL STUCK WITH THE GLAD-HANDLER!
PROJECTED SPIKES FROM MY BANDS--STRONGER THAN STEEL AND IT STILL DIDN'T DISLODGE HIM.
(WHAT SORT OF CREATURE IS THIS?)
(I DON'T KNOW; DIVAD--AVOID HIS JAWS AND CLAWS!)
WHILE LOCKJAW OCCUPIES THE SPACE TELEPORTER AND HIS NAVIGATOR, BLACK BOLT SWOOPS BEHIND AND AROUND GLADIATOR--
--WHISPERS THE MEREST SYLLABLE IN HIS EAR

--AND THE STRONGEST OF THE SHI'AR GOES REELING FROM THE CATASTROPHIC DISTURBANCE OF ELECTRONS NEAR HIS EARDRUM--
--FREEING QUASAR!
WHILE BACK IN REAL SPACE..
FIRE-HEADED ONE--
--YOU WILL RELEASE THE FAIR MAIDEN AT ONCE OR I SHALL BE FORCED TO DOUSE YOUR FLAME!
PERUN, YOU NEEDN'T--
<RELAX, STARBOLT; I'LL HANDLE THIS UNKEMPT BARBARIAN!>
HO! ATTACK ME FROM BEHIND--?
YOU WILL THINK TWICE BEFORE ATTEMPTING SO PRESUMPTUOUS AN ACT AGAIN!
BRAAAK

BRAWLING IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY SEALED SPACESHIP WITH POWERS AS EXTREME AS OURS IS NOT A VERY [redacted] IDEA--
--LET ME SEE IF I CAN DISSUADE OUR OPPONENTS BY BLINDING THEM ALL WITH DARKFORCE!
WELL DONE, MY SISTER. NOW WE CAN SUBDUE THEM WITH EASE!
HAVE A CARE, MIKHAIL. WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHAT CAPACITIES THESE ALIENS HAVE!
I WISH QUASAR WOULD GET BACK. I FEEL LIKE WE'RE FLIPPING MATCHES IN A TINDER BOX HERE.

WHAT--?
THIS ONE SHRINKS FROM ME AS IF SHE COULD SEE--!
MY DARKFORCE SPHERE--CHANGING SHAPE! BUT I'M NOT CAUSING IT TO--!
WHUUUUF!
THE MOMENT NIGHTSIDE RENDERS DARKSTAR INSENSATE HER DARK-FORCE GLOBES DISSIPATE--
--AND PANDEMONIUM REIGNS!
FWOOSH
WUGGK!

AT APPROXIMATELY THE SAME TIME COUNTLESS LIGHT YEARS AWAY, AN EBONY SHIP CIRCLES A NEPTUNE-SIZED PLANET...
(HAILING THE GREAT STRANGER. I AM SKELETRON, LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE ANCIENT TURGENTINE TECHNENIUM.
(I AM CAPTAIN OF THE DARK SEED; AND MY CREW OF FIFTY AND MYSELF ARE HUMBLE SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRADERS OF TRINKETS.
SHORTLY.
(WE HAVE ABOARD A CURIOSITY OF EXCEEDING PERPLEXITY. WE HAVE HEARD OF YOUR UNRIVALED ANALYTICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ABILITIES AND WOULD LIKE TO HAVE YOU APPRAISE THE OBJECT FOR US.
(DO WE HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO LAND?)
(SKELETRON, I'VE HEARD RUMORS CONCERNING THE STRANGER ARE YOU CERTAIN HE CAN BE TRUSTED?)
(IF WE INVOKE HIS INSATIABLE SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY, I BELIEVE HE CAN.)
(PERMISSION GRANTED, SKELETRON I WILL BEAM YOU LANDING COORDINATES!)
(HELMSMAN, PROCESS INCOMING COORDINATES!)

THE QUANTUM ZONE...
I THOUGHT FOR SURE THE NUMBER BLACK BOLT DID ON GLADIATOR WOULD HAVE TAKEN HIM OUT OF PLAY--
--BUT THE SUPER-SHIAR'S SLOUGHED IT OFF AND IS BACK TO MAKE MY LIFE...
GOT TO KEEP HIS MITTS OFF ME OR I'M... HMH?
BLACK BOLT'S NAILED VOYAGER!
AND I'VE GOT HIS DANCE PARTNER SURROUNDED!
LOCKJAW!
COOL! FIDO DID WHAT I COULDN'T--HE GOT GLADIATOR OUT OF THE WAY!

ALL THAT'S LEFT TO DO IS GRAB BLACK BOLT--
--AND QUANTUM JUMP BACK TO THE SHI'AR SHIP!
VOYAGER AND MOONDANCER WILL SIT TIGHT TILL THEY FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET MOONY OUT OF THERE.
RIGHT NOW I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOARD THE SHIP WE COMMANDEERED. I'VE BEEN GONE A LOT LONGER THAN I'D HOPED.
AHEAD...
LOOK, SMASHER-- YOUR TEAM SHOWED US HOW TOUGH YOU ARE; SO DID MINE. WE'VE GOT CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES.
CAN WE CALL IT QUITS NOW?
(MANTA--WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO YOUR LIGHT, DEAR FRIEND?)
LAYNIA, SPEAK, DEAR SISTER!
NNNNN!

YOUR SHIP IS NOT GOING TO TAKE MUCH MORE BATTERING, SO WHY NOT BE REASONABLE AND LET US BORROW IT FOR OUR MISSION?

WHY DON'T YOU BE REASONABLE AND JUST LEAVE?

CAN WE WORK OUT A COMPROMISE, MAYBE? YOU PEOPLE TAKE BACK CONTROL OF THE SHIP BUT YOU DROP US OFF WHERE WE NEED TO GO?

HMMM.

WELL, WITH GLADIATOR AWAY, I AM IN CHARGE.

THAT MAY BE ACCEPTABLE.

AND THEN...

WE'RE BACK. WHAT'S GOING ON?

WE MAY HAVE WORKED OUT A COMPROMISE. WE DON'T GET TO COMMANDEER THE SHIP, BUT THEY'LL DELIVER US TO WHERE WE WANT TO GO.

GREAT.

NICE WORK. GUESS I'LL GO FETCH SOME FOLKS I LEFT STRANDED.
FULL SPEED AHEAD. I'LL CATCH UP.
AND EVEN AS QUASAR FLASHES AWAY, LOCKJAW SHIMMERS IN...
WITHOUT GLADIATOR.
BLACK BOLT PATS THE DOG TO REWARD HIS WORK THEN BEFUDDLES THE CREATURE BY INDICATING THAT GLADIATOR SHOULD NOW BE FETCHED.
A SHORT TIME LATER, THE SHI'AR BATTLECRUISER NEARS THE TRANS-GALACTIC STARGATE NEAR EARTH'S SUN...
ITS ASTROGATION CREW, RESTORED TO THE BRIDGE OF THEIR OWN VESSEL, EXPERTLY DETERMINES THE PORTAL'S PRECISE ANGLE OF APERTURE...
...HITS THE HYPERDRIVE ENGINES AND ENTERS THE INTERSTELLAR EXPRESSWAY.
THEY ARE OBLIVIOUS OF THE TRAP THE STARBLASTERS LEFT UNTIL IT SNAPS CLOSED AROUND THEM!
CONTINUED IN QUASAR #55--
IN A STRANGER WORLD!